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AUTHOR Solliday, Michael A.; Seiferth, Berniece B.
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ABSTRACT

The extent and nature of censorship in Illinois social studies classrooms is assessed. A questionnaire included in the state Council for the Social Studies newsletter asked social studies teachers at all levels to respond to a 12-item questionnaire covering censorship of texts, teaching methods, textbook selection processes, and origins of censorship. While data are still being analyzed, responses thus far (n=43) suggest that Illinois social studies teachers are relatively free from academic censorship. However, teacher responses to date have been predominantly from secondary- and university-level teachers, making it difficult to assess the situation at the elementary level. Moreover, the issue of self-censorship, in which teachers refuse to cover certain topics, has not been addressed in this study and may be cause for concern to educators and school children. (LP)

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Education versus Indoctrination: Is It an Issue in Illinois Social Studies?

BY

Michael A. Solliday
Associate Professor

and

Berniece B. Seiferth
Professor

Censorship is a term that is familiar to the readers of social studies. But what is its impact on teachers of social studies in Illinois?

What is the emphasis of censorship? The movement, now extensive and influential, comes mostly from conservatives, but to some degree censorship is felt from all points on the political spectrum, right, left and center. At times this action even appears to place some feminists and conservatives in the same camp since both wish to censor pornography and sexism.

The National Chairman of the Stop Textbook Censorship Committee, a conservative group so named because they feel present textbooks have been censored already by liberal groups, is Terry Todd. She states, "If we could stop the censorship of textbooks as it regards family values, the role of parents, wives and mothers, the respect for our nation as a good nation and for capitalism as a responsible free enterprise, then we would have an adequate solution to our problems."

And so from Miami to the Northwest and from New England to the Sunbelt, the fight goes on over what we may see, hear, say, read and write. Since President Reagan was elected in November, 1980, censorship attempts have risen by about 300%, according to the American Library Association. In just four months after the election, 148 books in 34 states came under attack. Should ideas be allowed to be discussed in classrooms across

America or should students be protected from them? Lee Burress, a professor of English at the University of Wisconsin has conducted nationwide censorship surveys since 1966. He states: "We can't have a decent society if a small group of people are going to dictate what the rest of us can read or watch." According to Judith Krug of the American Library Associations Office of Intellectual Freedom, more than 1,000 censorship attempts were reported to the association last school year, compared to 300 in 1979-80. She agrees with Buress by stating that our constitutional republic strives to preserve the full marketplace of ideas, including minority views and beliefs.

Just 50 years ago on May 10, 1933, 40,000 people applauded as German students burned more than 20,000 books and pamphlets, representing such authors as Albert Einstein, Jack London, Helen Keller and Marcel Proust--for holding "alien thought." Prominent speakers in our own country who recently have faced heckling while trying to express their views include Jeane Kirkpatrick, Phyllis Schlafly, Sheik Yamani and Eldridge Cleaver. In other words, one of our constitutional guarantees, freedom of speech, was being denied these speakers. Our government also got into the act by denying a visa to the widow of the former-president Allende of Chile to speak at Stanford University and to church groups and ordered Georgi Arbatov, the Soviet's leading expert on American affairs, not to have contact with reporters while on a visit to America.

A sampling of censorship directly related to social studies textbooks includes these gems from Mel and Norma Gabler's Educational Research Analysts, one of the three major groups of censors:

Testbook Material: a discussion of the civil rights movement and the slogan, "Freedom!" Objection: everyone in this country has always been free unless they were in jail.

Textbook material: description of America as a nation of immigrants from other countries. Objection: presents a derogatory view of America that does not fostor patriotism.

Textbook material: all discussion of women's contribution to history. Objection: undermines women's traditional role.

Also in Wyoming, the Family Rights Forum filed suit to stop use of a history textbook. Reason? The book was anti-family because not all women were depicted as homemakers! Jerry Falwell has labelled most textbooks as Soviet propaganda. Here is a sample of other topics unacceptable to the Radical Religious Right pertaining to social studies:

-women's suffrage
-American Indian experiences
-Watergate experiences
-slavery in America
-the labor movement
-ecology/world hunger

And now let us look at the actual impact of the mind controllers on teachers of social studies in Illinois.

METHODOLOGY

A twelve item questionnaire on censorship in social studies classrooms was inserted in the spring issue of the ICSS Newsletter. ICSS members were asked to take thirty minutes to complete the questionnaire and return it to Michael A. Solliday. The first five questions gathered demographic information on the respondents and their school systems. The last seven questions concerned the censorship of social studies text books and teaching methods, text book selection processes, and origins of censorship. In addition, ICSS members were asked if censorship attempts were successful.

The data is being analyzed with the Statistical Analysis System (SAS). To date, we have frequency, percentage, and cumulative frequency scores for forty-three questionnaires. The censorship data is analyzed using the demographic data for sex, educational duties and student enrollment.

Information from additional questionnaires will be added to the data base and reported on at the 1983 NCSS Conference in San Francisco. An update will be inserted in an issue of the ICSS NEWSLETTER sometime during the next school year.

RESULTS

The average years of experience is over 16 years. A recent State Board of Education survey determined the mean age for Illinois teachers to be 40 1/2 years old. It would appear that the more experienced teachers are responding

to the questionnaire. Three percent of the respondents did not place a check in the blank indicating female or male. Twenty-eight percent of the respondents are women and sixty-five percent men. A majority of respondents (65%) have a master's degree. Three teach at the university level and they hold 75% of the doctor's degrees and represent 9% of the teachers returning the questionnaire.

Based on the information revealed by an analysis of the questionnaires, it would appear that Illinois social studies teachers are relatively free from academic censorship. The following series of tables substantiate this conclusion; however, as additional questionnaires are completed and returned these conclusions may change.

TABLES 1, 2

Twenty-two percent of the respondents report successful attempts to censor textbook topics from the school curriculum. According to the information from the survey, most of the recorded censorship occurs at the secondary level (88%) in schools with student enrollments greater than 1,000 and less than 2,000. As would be expected, university teachers report no textbook censorship. The small number of questionnaire returns from elementary teachers (2) prevent one from generalizing about textbook censorship in elementary schools. The censored items are listed on the table below each of the statements from the questionnaire.

No respondents report censorship of textbook selection by the following individual categories; administrators, a committee of teachers and parents, and school boards. They do report textbook selection processes conducted by the three groups in combination with other constituencies. All respondents

report a formal structure for selecting textbooks. Committees of teachers at the secondary level is the most predominant method for selecting textbooks (39%). A combination of individual teachers, committee of teachers and administrators is a distant second with 12% of the respondents selecting this category. One secondary teacher reports that students are involved in the textbook selection of his school system. Most of the smaller schools, 200 students or less, report that individual teachers and a committee of teachers are responsible for textbook selection. The larger school systems, 1,000 and higher, report a wider range in combinations of constituencies participating in textbook selection processes. As one might expect, university teachers select their own textbooks.

TABLE 3

Seventy-six percent of the respondents report no censorship of teaching methods. Almost all of the teaching methods censorship (80%) is taking place at the secondary level, in school systems with a student enrollment of more than 500 students. Discussion of controversial issues, role-playing and the discovery/inquiry methods are acceptable methodologies in Illinois schools. No respondent reports restraints imposed on them in using those particular teaching strategies. University teachers report no restrictions concerning teaching methods.

TABLE 4

Twenty-three percent of the respondents report groups responsible for censoring curriculum in their respective school systems. University teachers report no censorship by organizations or groups. All of the organization and group censorship reported by respondents occurs at the secondary level. No teachers reported input by religious groups, the Gablers or the National Organization for Women (NOW). Combinations of organizations and groups are reported to have some limited impact on teaching in Illinois schools. School boards are the primary origin of censorship, but only 9% of the respondents report this form of censorship.

TABLES 5, 6, 7

Nine percent of the respondents report successful attempts to censor education in Illinois. Even a few teachers (6%) report being accused of secular humanism. However, over 50% of the teachers report some form of written or understood policy to handle attempts to censor schools. One can conclude that schools are not censored, but they are prepared to deal with the issue if it arises.

CONCLUSIONS

The National Council for the Social Studies' (NCSS) concern for academic freedom and censorship by forces outside the classroom is not a major issue in Illinois. There appears to be little censorship in Illinois schools. There is another issue of equal significance to Illinois school children not addressed in this study. It is the issue of self-censorship, the extent to which Illinois social studies teachers refuse or decline to deal with topics, issues and methodologies they believe would be censored. NCSS President Carole Hahn expressed concern for this matter in a luncheon speech at the Indiana

Great Lakes Regional on April 15, 1983. We share this concern with President Hahn and encourage other social studies educators to seek information on this issue.

The conclusions presented in this report are based on a limited number of responses from around the state. More information is needed on censorship in elementary schools, but few elementary teachers belong to ICSS. Therefore such information will have to be gathered by other means. If you have not responded to the censorship questionnaire, please do so. An update on the results will appear in an ICSS publication later this academic year.

REFERENCES

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TABLE 1

Textbook Topic Censorship

By Educational Duties

	Junior H.S./ Middle School N=4	Secondary N=33	Percentage of Total
A Particular Textbook: World Geography & The Nun's Story			1(2.0%)
Controversial Issues: Homosexuality & Texts In Health & Home Ec.		2(6.06%)	2(5.0%)
Supplemental Resource Material: War in Illinois		1(3.03%)	1(2.0%)
Global Education, Communism, Controversial Issues, A Particular Textbook & Holocaust		1(3.03%)	1(2.0%)
No Textbook Topics Censored	4(100%)	29(87.87%)	38(88.0%)

TABLE 2

Textbook Topic Censorship

By Size of School

	500-999 students N=10	1000-1699 students N=8	1700-2599 students N=14	Percentage of Total N=43
A Particular Textbook: World Geography Textbook & The Nun's Story				1(2.0%)
Controversial Issues Homosexuality & Text-Books in Health & Home Economics			2(14.28%)	2(5.0%)
Supplemental Resource Materials: War in Illinois		1(12.5%)		1(2.0%)
Global Education, Communism, Controversial Issues, A Particular Textbook, Holocaust			1(7.143%)	1(2.0%)
No Textbook Topic Censored	10(100%)	7(87.5%)	11(78.57%)	38(88.0%)

TABLE 3

Teaching Methods Censored from the Curriculum by Educational Duties

	Elem N=2	Junior/ Middle N=4	Secondary N=33	Admin. N=1	Univ/ College N=3	Percentage of Total N=43
Controversial Outside Speakers			2(6.06%)			2(5.0%)
Controversial Films/ TV			2(6.06%)			2(5.0%)
Discussion of Controversial Issues Discovery/Inquiry Methods Open-Ended Questions Controversial Films/ TV			1(3.03%)			1(2.0%)
Discussion of Controversial Issues Discovery/Inquiry Methods Open-Ended Questions Controversial Outside Speakers Controversial Films/ TV			1(3.03%)			1(2.0%)
Discussion of Controversial Issues Role-Playings/Psydo Drama Discovery/Inquiry Methods Open-Ended Questions Controversial Outside Speakers Contoversial films/ TV Computer Instruction			1(3.03%)	1(100%)		2(5.0%)
Controversial Outside Speakers Controversial Films/ TV			1(3.03%)			1(2.0%)
Discovery/Inquiry Methods Open-Ended Questions	1(50%)					1(2.0%)
No Censorship of Teaching Methods	1(50%)	4(100%)	25(75.76%)	(0. %)	3(100%)	33(77.0%)

TABLF 4

Origin of Censorship
by Education Duties

	Elem N=2	Junior/ Middle N=4	Secondary N=33	Admin. N=1	College/ Univ. N=3	Percentage of Total N=43
chool Board			4(12.12%)			4(9.0%)
ndividual Parent			1(3.03%)			1(2.0%)
agle Forum and ndividual Parent			2(6.06%)			2(5.0%)
agle Forum and ohn Birch Society			1(3.03%)			1(2.0%)
dministration			1(3.03%)			1(2.0%)
o Censorship	2(100%)	4(100%)	24(72.73%)	1(100%)	3(100%)	34(79.0%)

TABLE 5

Were Censorship
Attempts Successful

	Yes	No	Blank
Censorship was Successful	4(9%)	13(31%)	26(60%)

Comments: Somewhat
No change occured as a result of this intervention.
Yes, He (an Administrator) simply would not allow the speaker in the school.
Yes, parent protest to board brought about some change.
Individual parents objected to topics in fields other than social studies, but were not successful in attempts to have the material censored.

TABLE 6

Accused of Teaching
Secular Humanism

	Yes	No	Blank
Accussed of Teaching Secular Humanism	3(6%)	19(43%)	22(51%)

Comments: Yes, but to no avail
By growing Christian schools movement
Perhaps in a general way. Though nothing has come of it.
Not to my knowledge.

TABLE 7

Pre-Plans for
Handling
Censorship

	Written-Board Policy	Non-Written Understood	Nothing or Blank
Format of Plan to Handle Censorship	7(16%)	11(38%)	20(46%)

Comments:

General procedures for handling complaints and criticisms, not confined to censorship and in Board policy.
We are very fortunate in having a very supportive community and administration
Spokesman for ALA stated only 20% cases censorship "visible" (recorded)